

# Managing recruitment and retention in a growing trust



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# Managing recruitment and retention in the education sector



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Schools and trusts across the UK are suffering in a recruitment and retention crisis. 12 out of 17 subjects fell below recruitment targets last year, continuing the post-pandemic trend of severe under-recruitment for secondary.<sup>1</sup> High stress and workload are driving talented leaders and educators out of the sector, and trusts are battling tight budgets and rising employer costs.<sup>2</sup>

It's no surprise that recruitment and retention are high on the agenda for trust leaders. Yet, for many, this brings a host of challenges – far greater than just a recruitment plan. This complex landscape places immense pressure on MAT leaders, tasked with filling critical roles under challenging financial and time constraints, while managing a growing number of schools to stay consistent, standardised, and compliant.


This guide aims to empower you to build a scalable, compliant and efficient people management strategy across a growing trust. Our education HR and recruitment experts provide practical, actionable advice on standardisation, compliance and data management to develop robust, long-term recruitment and retention strategies to secure your trust's most valuable asset: its people.

I hope this book leaves you with ideas and strategies for your own trust, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

All the best

Siobhan Hammond, BA (Hons) CiPD

[1] *The Teaching Workforce: Summary of research, NFER, 2025*  
[2] *Increasing teacher numbers: Secondary and further education, House of Commons, 24-25* and *Schools and colleges in the 2025 Spending Review, IFS, 2025*



# The People Strategy Series

for schools and MATs

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# The foundations

As your trust grows, repositioning recruitment from a reactive task to a strategic function allows you to maximise 5-year workforce plans and harmonise strategy across your schools. This chapter explores the foundations of building a strategic recruitment function across a multi-academy trust.

## Defining your trust-wide Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

As trusts grow, how can they compete with the trust ‘next door’? An Employee Value Proposition (EVP) goes beyond salary to articulate the unique benefits and experiences an employee can expect from working within the trust. The EVP should be an extension of your overall people strategy and trust core vision.

### Exercise

Ask yourself these questions about your trust brand and reputation before thinking about your EVP:

- *How would a teacher in a school outside your trust describe your MAT’s reputation? What three words do you think they would use?*
- *When was the last time we audited our careers page, job descriptions, and social media presence? Do they accurately reflect who we are and what we offer today?*

### How to define your trust EVP:

**Remuneration and benefits:** While not the only factor, competitive salaries can give you the edge. Alongside a competitive salary, comprehensive benefits, like pension schemes, enhanced parental leave policies and health and wellbeing programmes, give potential employees a clear view that your trust is investing in their people.

**Culture and mission:** Education professionals are often mission-driven, wanting to make a difference to children’s education. A strong EVP aligns with them, showcasing the trust’s vision, values, and its impact on student outcomes. A compelling EVP creates a sense of belonging and purpose.

**Career development and progression:** Unlike a school, trusts can offer diverse career pathways. Highlight these opportunities in your EVP, such as:

- Leadership development programmes
- Mentoring and coaching
- Cross-school collaboration and secondment opportunities
- Access to high-quality continuous professional development (CPD)

**Work-life balance and wellbeing:** With workload and stress being the top 2 reasons teachers and leaders leave the education sector, how is your trust addressing and alleviating these challenges? <sup>1</sup>

- Flexible working offerings – does your trust allow for job sharing, part-time roles and remote planning time?
- What is your trust doing to reduce workload – does technology relieve admin and streamline processes?
- Wellbeing support offerings – Mental health first aiders, counselling and Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)

**Recognition and appreciation:** Recognising and rewarding hard work is important to empower employees. This might be through formal recognition programmes, long-service awards and a culture of regular, informal praise from senior leaders.

The best Employee Value Propositions are a reflection of the lived experiences of your trust employees. Co-create these with staff using surveys, focus groups and exit interviews to understand why staff choose to stay, what they value most and why others choose to leave. Make use of current staff testimonials and success stories to add real anecdotal evidence to your EVP.

### Exercise

Use the questions and prompts below to help you perfect your Employee Value Proposition:

- *If we were to create a “Trust Staff Charter,” what would be the non-negotiable promises we make to our employees regarding their professional development, workload, and wellbeing?*
- *Beyond pay, what are the most valuable benefits our staff receive? How do we ensure they feel seen, valued, and well-supported?*
- *When was the last time we formally gathered feedback from our staff on their workload and wellbeing? Are we acting on that feedback, or is it just a survey?*
- *Identify your trust’s unique selling points. Does your trust have any distinctive strengths, such as a unique approach to curriculum, a renowned leadership programme or an exceptional approach to wellbeing? What makes us a better place to work than a neighbouring MAT or a local authority school?*

Embed the EVP in all of your trust HR practices, from recruitment to performance management. These values should shine through daily.

Communicate and share your EVP across your trust and recruitment platforms. This could include your trust website, social media and job postings. Encourage your staff to share their experiences and participate in recruitment events – use referral programmes to leverage the power of your employee voices.

Once your EVP has launched, use people metrics to measure the effectiveness. Staff retention rates, engagement survey scores and recruitment success can highlight if your EVP is effective and whether it requires tweaks. Regularly review your EVP to make sure it stays competitive in an evolving market.

[1] [The Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders, Wave 3, Department for Education, 2024](#)



### Using data to forecast hiring needs

By analysing your people data and aligning with five-year plans, your trust can stay one foot ahead. Below are 6 ways you can analyse and use data to forecast hiring needs:

Assess what your MAT critical roles are. Which roles, if vacant, would significantly disrupt daily operations or derail strategic initiatives? You might also consider how difficult it is to recruit for certain roles – is there a limited pool of qualified candidates, or are the required skills highly specialised? For example, a highly specialised subject lead across multiple schools or a key finance officer responsible for the trust's budget management might be considered a critical role due to their operational impact and the difficulty of finding a replacement.

Use employee data on performance management and qualifications to assess where you might have skills gaps. Analysis across schools and departments can show you where your schools might be understaffed, have upcoming leavers or long-term absences.

If your trust is planning on taking on more schools, project any new roles that will be required, such as administrative or leadership.

Use skills gap data to plan continuous personal development opportunities, which can support internal career development. Assess potential leadership capabilities to drive progression to senior roles. Establish a clear career pathway for high-potential staff. This not only prepares them for future roles but also boosts morale and retention by showing a commitment to their growth.

Anticipating turnover using historical data or current performance data means you are able to predict retirements, planned departures or other factors that leave roles to be filled.

Changes in the sector might also shape how you forecast future hiring needs. Changes in curriculum, technology and government policies might impact the skills needed in a future workforce. With artificial intelligence (AI) on the increase, is it becoming critical to hire an IT specialist?

All workforce and hiring plans must align with the MAT's financial strategy. Integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP) helps ensure that staffing decisions are sustainable and support the MAT's overarching educational and financial goals.

By following these steps, a MAT can move from a reactive hiring model to a proactive, strategic approach that builds long-term resilience and ensures continuous operational and educational excellence.

### Exercise

Reflect on the following questions to see what other important data analytics can inform your future hiring decisions.

- *What is our average time-to-hire for a teaching role? How does this compare to last year?*
- *Beyond turnover rates, what specific data points are we tracking? Are we monitoring things like staff sickness trends, reasons for leaving (e.g., exit interview data), or the number of internal promotions?*
- *Looking at our retention data, what patterns emerge? Do we see higher turnover in specific schools, key stages, or subject areas?*

### Creating a trust-wide recruitment framework

Managing recruitment when your schools are based across a range of local authorities, with differing notice periods and patterns, can be tricky. Agreeing and aligning with your schools on key timelines, roles, and responsibilities will help with building a trust-wide recruitment framework.

While a MAT doesn't need to centralise every aspect of recruitment, it's beneficial to centralise certain key functions to ensure consistency and build efficiencies. A centralised team are able to manage the framework and provide advice to schools. They can also consider things such as trust-wide salary banding for roles and whether it aligns with the five-year workforce plan. By centralising framework management and strategy, trusts support their schools more effectively, streamlining processes and communication.

An online recruitment portal provides a standardised process from vacancy creation to onboarding for each school. The portal also gives central teams a clear oversight of ongoing recruitment.

# A ‘one-trust’ approach to finding talent

## Standardisation of trust recruitment to build a strong employer brand

As a trust, building a strong employer brand across all your schools is important to strengthen your Employee Value Proposition. By standardising public-facing elements of your recruitment, you can empower schools while maintaining brand consistency. All without losing the core trust message.

A trust doesn’t need to centralise every aspect of recruitment. However, there are aspects that, when centralised, become easier to manage and standardise across a growing trust. We’ve put together some examples that show you what this looks like in practice:

### A centralised careers hub

A single careers website for all trust vacancies makes it easy for candidates to see the breadth of opportunities available. Internally, it means you can implement consistent design, tone of voice and visual branding to present a single, strong employer brand.

### Centralised advertising and marketing

Marketing their own job vacancies can be daunting for schools, with little to no budget allocated to strategic advertising. Centralising this support means trusts can get more for their money when investing in advertising platforms or social media campaigns, leveraging the economies of scale to reach a wider audience.

### Establishing trust-wide policies and procedures

Making sure your schools are following a single, robust recruitment procedure ensures fairness, consistency and compliance. If all your schools are following the same guidance, it’s much easier for central teams to approve, track and support their recruitment process. Standardising documents such as application forms, job descriptions and personal specifications helps get school vacancies on the centralised careers hub much faster.

### A centralised Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

A single ATS for all trust recruitment means central teams have a clear oversight of all vacancies across the trust, as well as allowing for a consistent and standardised process. MAT leaders can access valuable data on recruitment trends, time-to-hire and candidate sources to further improve their recruitment strategies.

Regular training across schools makes sure that everyone involved in the process is on the same page, working together cohesively.

## Writing adverts that sell your trust vision, not just school vacancies

You want to attract candidates who are not just looking for a job but are seeking to be part of a larger, mission-driven organisation.

Standardised templates can support with keeping everything on brand, but take it one step further to really sell your trust vision. A trust recruitment webpage allows for a cohesive, on-brand experience for candidates, building on the core trust values. Candidates often ‘rule out’ organisations based on their own research, and your website is a window into your organisation, its culture, its values and its direction of travel. Include written and video testimonials from current employees to bring your trust vacancy page to life. Link this site to your social media to highlight your community even further.

Introduce the trust at the start of every job advert. A compelling statement integrating the trust’s core values can begin to build the picture of a shared ethos across all your schools. Include trust-level benefits and opportunities that might not otherwise be available in a singular school – professional development, career progression and shared resources. Candidates might be applying to work in a single school within your trust, but they will be drawn in by the benefits that a growing multi-academy trust can offer.

Paint a picture of the role within the trust. Instead of saying “*You will be responsible for teaching Key Stage 3 Maths*”, say “*You will be a key part of our collaborative Maths department, working with subject leads across the trust to develop and deliver an innovative curriculum to inspire our students.*” Building a picture of how your trust and schools work collaboratively helps to build the picture of shared trust ethos and support. Statements like the above also inspire candidates to see the bigger picture and where this job role could take them in your trust.

Smarter sourcing: Effective advertising platforms and measuring ROI

Effective advertising for trusts often involves a combination of free government platforms, dedicated education-specific platforms, and applicant tracking systems (ATS). Relying on a single platform can limit your reach. Lean on economies of scale by purchasing subscriptions for the whole trust, potentially benefiting from bulk discounts.

Consider an integrated approach across platforms to make the best use of all their offerings. For example, Teaching Vacancies might be a great place to advertise for core teaching roles, but where are candidates for more specific or centralised roles looking? Making the most of your trust website, social media, community hubs, and local universities can help widen the reach of your adverts. Recruitment events and open days are also a great way to showcase your trust vision – host these as a trust to avoid each school having to host individually.

Recommend a friend schemes are also great for attracting candidates as well as utilising your parent network. By being creative and thinking 'outside the box', you could be saving money from your budget that could be used elsewhere.

A case-by-case basis should be used to plan whether agency support is required for specialist roles. However, with recruitment being managed centrally, it means you are able to hold a large talent pool for vacancies across your trust, reducing the need for agency support.

Developing a trust-wide talent pool reduces the need for vacancies to be readvertised with costly fees. An applicant might not have been successful at one school, but they might be suitable for a role at another school.

To measure return on investment with advertising, track and regularly review key metrics, such as:

- Cost per hire
- Time to hire
- Quality per hire – consider retention rate, performance reviews and internal promotions to show hires that hold value to the organisation

Track the costs of advertising channels and the number of applications, as well as successful hires, that come through these. A channel might produce a lot of applicants, but are they high-quality?

Once you have identified high-performing channels, you might consider performing A/B tests with job advert formats – this can highlight which formats are most effective at getting candidates to apply.

# Selection and compliance:

## Mastering the process at scale

Trusts need to manage growing numbers of schools to stay consistent, standardised and compliant – mastering this at scale across recruitment, onboarding and retention can be challenging.

Centralising key parts of your recruitment process can help to streamline. Once a vacancy is advertised and the applications start coming in, how can trusts continue to master the process at scale?

### KCSIE, Safer Recruitment, and the Single Central Record (SCR)

Managing KCSIE, Safer Recruitment and the SCR at scale must have a robust and streamlined process in place. These key areas are an essential ‘risk assessment’ for trusts, and it’s vital that schools are following consistent and compliant processes.

Consider how you are already managing this across your trust. Do schools manage this process independently, or is there central support available to alleviate administrative burdens in schools?

#### Centralising the process – Roles and responsibilities

Deciding where responsibilities lie, whether that be centrally or within the schools, is key to building a clear workflow for Safer Recruitment.

As your trust grows, managing recruitment centrally can alleviate the administrative burdens on tightly-staffed schools, saving time and money and bringing consistency to processes, which is important when auditing compliance. A centralised recruitment and HR team managing applications and employment checks allows for clear oversight and expertise, with schools able to focus on interviews.

#### Leveraging technology for Single Central Record Management

The collection of documents and pre-employment checks is a vital part of KCSIE and Safer Recruitment guidelines. As a central trust team, having a clear workflow and oversight of this information being collected ensures compliance and consistency.

A digital or cloud-based Single Central Record allows schools and trust central teams to keep this up-to-date in real time and track expiry dates, allowing for proactive management and preventing compliance gaps. Consider linking this up with a recruitment system, so you can have peace of mind that new employee details are being pushed straight to your Single Central Record.

### Exercise

Using the table below, define where and by whom these key activities are being managed, and how they could be improved or centrally managed. Do these teams meet regularly to review the process and make improvements? If centralising parts of this process is new, how are you handling the change and getting buy-in from key stakeholders?

#### Before shortlist

- Choose selection criteria
- Choose methods of assessment (interview, role play etc)
- Train and brief those carrying out the interview or assessment
- Advertise the post
- Design interview Qs, role play and assessments

#### Shortlist

- Send out information to prospective applicants
- Read application forms and check information
- Request references
- Scrutinise references
- Ask for a criminal information self-disclosure
- Give prospective applicants information about safeguarding policies and vetting checks carried out
- Agree which candidates are to be shortlisted
- Undertake online searches for candidates

#### Interview

- Scrutinise and copy identity documents
- Carry out interview, role play or assessments
- Check gaps or issues on the application form with the candidate
- Discuss criminal convictions history with candidate
- Probe candidates attitudes towards safeguarding and motivation for working with children

#### Post interview

- See birth certificate to check whether an individual has ever changed their name
- For teaching posts, check prohibited list and GTCE list
- Arrange induction training
- Request sight of DBS certificate
- Check qualifications and professional registration
- Make a decision to offer post to individual
- Check the DBS barred list
- Verify any references received electronically



Comprehensive and consistent training

Regular training for hiring managers across your schools is essential to make sure they are up-to-date with KCSIE and Safer Recruitment guidelines. Consider combining equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training into your programme to make sure hiring practices are fair and unbiased. In order to make sure this training stays up-to-date, manage this centrally, ideally using a CPD and training tracking system to alert you to expiry dates in good time.

- Consider training formats, such as:
- Large-scale conferences or INSET days for all staff
  - Smaller, role-specific workshops
  - Online courses, webinars, and self-study modules

By combining face-to-face learning with virtual or self-led training, you can offer flexibility to staff.

Ongoing audits and quality assurance

Even with central team management, schools and leaders must work together to regularly audit their processes and Single Central Record.

Regular audits to suit your trust - whether that be weekly, monthly or termly - ensure compliance and allow you to keep on top of non-compliance. Having a clear escalation policy for any gaps or issues is key to embedding accountability across the trust.

Fair and effective selection: Implementing a consistent shortlisting and interview process across multiple schools

Having a standardised trust approach allows schools to confidently conduct compliant and effective shortlisting and interviews. To implement a consistent shortlisting and interview process, consider:

Implement trust-wide scoring matrices for shortlisting

This allows for standardised scoring across the trust, meaning candidates are all being assessed on the same matrix. This can be helpful if you need to transfer candidates to other vacancies within the trust.

Issuing standard interview questions

To ensure a fair and consistent evaluation process, a bank of standardised, competency-based questions should be used. These can be supplemented with specific questions relevant to the school's context. A key part of this is to include mandatory safeguarding questions in every interview.

Using an Applicant Tracking System

An Applicant Tracking System allows candidates to upload their own documents and personal information, meaning ID scanning and reference checks can be automated. Using a trust-wide software solution means that your schools are all following the same process, and central teams can have a consistent oversight. Recruitment systems can provide a communication portal to automate emails and handle candidate messages easily.

# From onboarding to retention:

## Keeping your best people

90% of respondents in the Department for Education’s Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders survey cited high workload and poor wellbeing as their top reasons leaving the sector.<sup>1</sup> Trust leaders have retention high on their agenda – how can they give new employees the best start and support them throughout a career in their trust?

### Onboarding at scale: Welcoming new staff consistently and effectively across the trust

Before building a standardised onboarding process across your trust, it’s beneficial to agree on what will be looked after centrally and what will be looked after by each school. When everyone understands the role they play, processes can run smoothly, even across large organisations.

A software system to track recruitment and offers helps trusts to have an advanced view of upcoming onboarding. A spreadsheet might suffice for so long – but if information is not kept up-to-date, the process becomes disjointed, reflecting badly on your onboarding process.

To keep consistency across the trust, consider allocating welcome pack production to your central team. This way, packs are reflective of the whole trust, with standardised information for new starters. Consider including a message from the trust CEO to set the tone and re-highlight the trust’s core mission and values. Key trust-wide information can include:

- Policies and where to access,
- MAT structure and central team information,
- CPD opportunities and benefits
- Instructions for pre-start paperwork or training

A standardised induction checklist makes sure that schools are meeting legal compliance requirements as well as following the agreed trust-wide process.

Managing this through a shared ATS or HR system adds an extra layer of peace of mind for central HR teams – completion of checks, policy acknowledgement and more are tracked in real-time, with no need to contact the schools for updates.

### Using exit interviews and absence trends to build a proactive retention strategy

Metrics alone aren’t enough to provide a powerful understanding of our staff. Using metrics alongside employee exit interviews, performance reviews, and more helps build a comprehensive narrative of the entire employee lifecycle.

Exit interviews are an opportunity to find how a staff member felt, including the support they received, their level of value, and what triggered their departure. Matching this data with metrics helps you spot trends such as high workload, understaffing pressures, or low skill levels. Exit interviews also provide you with clear feedback on the impact that Employee Assistance Programmes and wellbeing strategies are having directly on your staff.

Absence trends supports leaders to predict burnout or flight risks amongst employees. Proactively analysing this data allows you to support employees quickly and effectively

Self-reflection exercises, targeted staff surveys and insightful performance reviews provide leaders with deeper insights into their people, bringing together the numbers and the narrative.

Anonymous surveys allow you to dive deeper into challenges and worries that staff might be having. Include questions on key areas, such as:

- Alignment with trust-wide cultures and values
- Workload and work-life balance
- Support and resources – line managers, wellbeing resources, EAPs, work resources
- Professional development and career growth
- Retention-specific questions –
  - Intent to stay: *"I see myself working in this multi-academy trust for the next three years."*
  - Trust as an employer: *"Would you recommend this multi-academy trust to a friend or family member as a good place to work?"*
  - Factors for leaving: *"What factors, if any, might lead you to consider leaving the trust?"* (Provide a list of options, such as: workload, pay, career progression, school leadership, lack of support, school culture, etc., with an option for "other.")
  - Re-hiring: *"If you were to leave the trust, would you consider returning in the future?"*

If you wanted to review the survey data by department or role, add drop-downs to guide analysis and improve how you respond to results.

## Building career pathways: How to "grow your own" leaders and foster loyalty

The best retention tool is showing staff that they have a future with your trust – but how do you build that? Clear succession planning and wellbeing support are driving factors of successful retention in trusts.

### Exercise

Below are some questions about building a talent pipeline and effective succession planning. Take 15 minutes to reflect on your own trust frameworks and strategies already in place:

- Do we have a clear, multi-year workforce plan? For example, where do we anticipate our greatest staffing needs will be in three or five years' time (e.g., headteachers, specific subject specialists)?
- What are we doing today to "grow our own" talent? Are we actively investing in initial teacher training, coaching new ECTs, or offering leadership development opportunities to create a pipeline of future leaders?
- What professional development opportunities do we offer that staff can't get elsewhere? Are these tailored to individual needs or are they one-size-fits-all?
- Consider a high-performing middle leader. What is their pathway to senior leadership within our trust? Is that pathway clear, and do they know what the next step looks like, without needing to ask?
- How effectively are we leveraging our existing network? What is our strategy for encouraging and rewarding staff referrals?
- How do we celebrate success and acknowledge hard work across the trust? Is it consistent and meaningful, or does it vary from school to school?

Evidence from work by our FusionHR team suggests that trusts promote faster but experience higher exit rates (especially larger/system-leader trusts), and that churn stabilises as schools spend longer in-trust, becoming more integrated. Trusts taking on schools facing significant challenges might see a higher churn before trust-led support takes effect.

To mitigate this and begin to build trust-wide career pathways, explore ways that you can develop the shared ethos and values across the trust:

- Host joint events, awards, and send trust newsletters to create a sense of belonging and shared purpose across schools
- Develop trust-wide CPD programmes – including cross-school collaboration to motivate and inspire employees
- Develop school 'buddy' schemes to support newer schools

## Flexible working: What happens to teachers after maternity leave?

A [recent report by The Key](#) explores the wide assumption that the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention is in part due to women in their 30s, who make up the largest cohort of the profession, find it challenging to combine their roles with parenthood. The report background states that it is known that:

- The largest cohort of teachers in England is women in their thirties
- Among teachers, women in their thirties are the group that most correlates with those having babies, and therefore taking maternity leave
- The largest cohort of teachers who leave the sector is women in their thirties

The report, based on 150,000 teachers, found that those who go on maternity leave are less likely than the rest of the profession to quit their school over a four-year period, as long as they have an opportunity to work part-time. The authors of the report explain that these findings served as compelling evidence that schools and trusts must stop dismissing part-time working as 'too complex to administer'.

The report highlights that schools and trusts are failing to retain teachers in their first year back from maternity leave, with 17% quitting within the first year of their return from maternity leave. Just 32% of teachers quit their school within four years of starting maternity leave if they switch to a part-time role. This rises to a worrying 45% for teachers who go on maternity leave and return to a full-time role. In comparison, on average, 42% of teachers across the whole profession quit their school within the same four-year period, with the figure rising to 44% for male teachers only. The difference between the 32% and 42% equates to around 50,000 teachers.

The report provides urgent recommendations to schools and trusts, including but not limited to:

- Proactive alignment of their retention strategy and the culture of their organisation to support returning mothers.
- Enabling teachers returning after maternity leave to work part-time if requested, because this increases retention rates
- Advertise vacancies as being open to flexible working, part-time working and job share arrangements, to support teachers to move between schools after having maternity leave, as well as facilitating career progression
- Facilitate a more strategic and iterative approach to timetabling, involving multiple members of the SLT to ensure timetables are aligned with the school's retention strategy
- Support teachers returning from maternity leave, not just in the year they come back, but over the first few years after their return, through professional coaching or buddying with existing staff

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# The growing trust: Managing people strategy through change

## Workforce planning

Workforce planning is more than just a numbers game; it's a strategic pillar for school and trust success. The Department for Education's 'school workforce planning' identifies six core principles, helping school and trust leaders to effectively deploy their workforce to achieve the best outcomes whilst managing budgets.<sup>[1]</sup>

### 1. Have a clear school vision, underpinned by a people strategy

Effective leaders are clear about their purpose and vision and ensure every member of staff understands how they contribute to pupil learning. An effective people strategy should underpin your vision, driving workforce planning and allowing staff to reach their full potential.

### 2. Invest in the development of people

Investing in high-quality professional development is crucial for recruitment and retention. Effective trusts often run their own evidence-based professional development (PD), leveraging and cascading expertise across the trust. This might include peer-to-peer coaching, which can be significantly more cost-effective and simpler to organise.

Trusts can play an active role in teacher supply and development through government programmes – for example, running or partnering in Initial Teacher Training (ITT), supporting the Early Career Framework (ECF), and engaging with the National Institute of Teaching. These initiatives all contribute to the continuous development of your workforce.

Consider using apprenticeship routes to support staff into teaching. The Teacher Degree Apprenticeship, which launched in September 2025, and the newly shortened 9-month Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship are additional pathways trusts can use to attract and develop new teachers.

### 3. Review working practices to ensure staff can focus on what matters

High workload is one of the top reasons why staff consider leaving the sector. Support employees by continuously reviewing and improving their workload and its management – remove non-value-add activities, and explore the DfE's guidance on improving workload and wellbeing for school staff.

Trusts should make the most of their economies of scale by centralising administrative tasks, such as finance and procurement, freeing up their school leaders to focus on learning in the classroom. Software systems for HR and recruitment are a great way to begin centralising tasks and alleviating workload from schools.

### 4. Be data and evidence led to guide staffing and decisions

Using data to inform retention strategies and career development can keep trusts ahead of the curve. Trusts also have the scale to use centralised data to inform local workforce decisions, something single schools can't do easily. Pooling data allows for clear trend analysis to inform future decisions and benchmark schools.

Tools like Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning (ICFP) support schools to maximise their staff structure and budgets to achieve educational success and financial sustainability.

### 5. Be creative, saving where you can, to invest elsewhere

Inefficiencies across growing trusts can impact your budget and staff wellbeing, causing high workload, poor work-life balance and wasted budgets. Regular reviews of inefficiencies can free up resources that can be reinvested where they're most needed.

Trusts can manage staffing and recruitment at a central level to avoid unnecessary costs. Large or growing trusts may also find it beneficial to invest in specialist roles such as an IT Specialist to work at a greater scale, managing services and infrastructure across the organisation.

### 6. Have a culture, system and processes that enable staff to be deployed flexibly across schools

Trusts have a unique opportunity to flexibly deploy staff across schools. This strategy can support staff career progression, drive school improvement, spread best practice, and fill expertise gaps without costly recruitment exercises. Trusts can do this by creating cross-school roles which allow their most effective practitioners and professionals to support multiple schools.

## Exercise

Using these core principles, reflect on your own trust workforce plans:

- *How clearly is your trust's vision communicated? Can every member of your team articulate how their role contributes directly to pupil outcomes?*
- *Map the professional development opportunities currently available within your trust. Are they tailored to the specific needs of your staff? Where are the gaps? Consider how you can leverage internal expertise for cost-effective, peer-led learning.*
- *What are the three most time-consuming administrative tasks for your school leaders? How could centralising or streamlining these tasks at the trust level free up time to focus on teaching and learning?*
- *How are you currently using data to inform your staffing decisions? Identify one key metric you could start tracking to improve your workforce planning in the next quarter.*
- *What are some "creative" solutions your trust has implemented to save money? Can you find new ways to leverage your collective buying power to secure better deals and free up funds for a key strategic priority?*
- *Brainstorm a list of specialist roles or areas of expertise within your MAT. How could a flexible deployment model allow you to share this expertise across different schools to drive improvement? What systems would need to be in place to make this work?*



# How software can streamline recruitment and support retention

The impact of technology on HR and recruitment in education can be immense. Centralising your people management with a trust-wide software solution provides consistency, accuracy and visibility across your schools. Growing trusts are working towards building a single source of truth that provides strategic insights to develop their people strategy – with disjointed systems and processes, this just won't happen.

SAMpeople and SAMpeople Recruit integrate seamlessly to give you clear and streamlined processes for recruitment, retention and more.

## Achieve a single source of truth for all people data

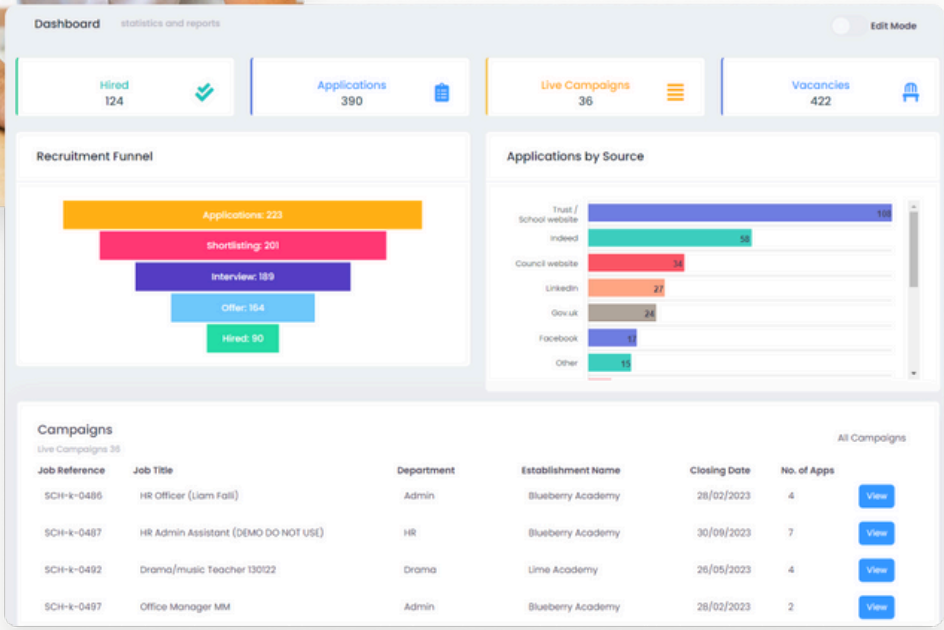
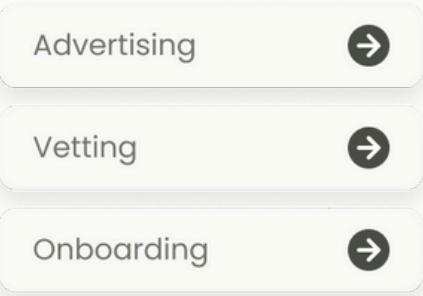
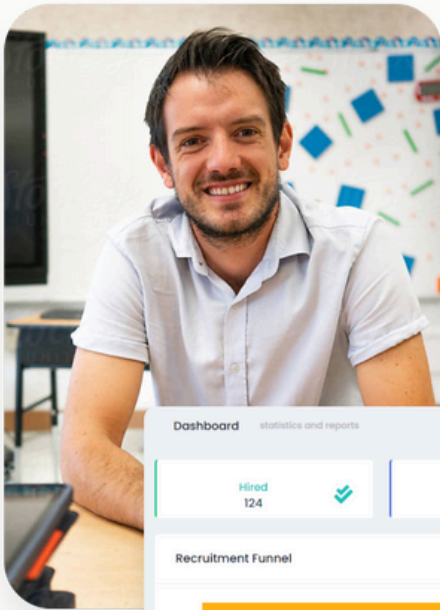
It's time to end spreadsheet chaos. An integrated HR and recruitment system, like SAMpeople, can give you a single view of what's happening across your organisation at any one time. Access a single view of all recruitment in SAMpeople Recruit and compare school-by-school HR data in SAMpeople. Eliminate the need for manual data entry and reduce the risk of errors, particularly with records that need to be duplicated across multiple schools.

SAMpeople Recruit helps you stay aligned with Safer Recruitment guidelines while cutting down admin. Candidates upload their data and documents straight into the system – no scanning or re-entering needed. That means a smoother, safer experience for applicants, and confidence for you that candidate data is accurate and fully compliant. When new hires are onboarded, data pushes instantly into SAMpeople, simultaneously updating your Single Central Record with a clear audit trail for compliance. All safeguarding documents are verified and maintained to the required standard using automatic alerts to flag expiry dates.

Build an evidence base for performance management, career progress and absence data across all schools and staff in SAMpeople's extensive modules – making reporting and analysis quicker and more comprehensive.

## Handle strategic growth and change management with confidence

By automating time-consuming administrative tasks – like managing staff contracts, tracking absences, and handling performance reviews – SAMpeople frees up the central team to focus on more strategic initiatives, such as developing a people strategy, improving staff wellbeing, and supporting school leaders. This operational efficiency is crucial for trusts looking to grow and manage their resources effectively.



## Building strategic insight: Quick and easy reporting for your CEO and Board

By having a single source of truth in SAMpeople, you can begin to access strategic insights using SAMpeople's reporting and Power BI dashboards. Bring together people data from across your trust to inform absence strategies, wellbeing initiatives and workforce planning.

With SAMpeople Recruit, you can produce reports showing time-to-hire, cost-to-hire and applicant diversity across your trust. Harness data in SAMpeople to bring your Board key reports on people and operations, such as staffing and workforce, professional development and compliance.

Use SAMpeople's reporting to gather insights and:

- Identify 'flight risks' early through patterns in absence, performance dips or low engagement
- Delve into the full journey of every member of staff to see what events might have contributed to an exit
- Understand which factors most strongly influence retention by cohort, phase or region
- Share learnings and best practices amongst schools in the trust

## Effective recruitment and onboarding processes

SAMpeople Recruit gives you a seamless applicant tracking system (ATS) that helps trusts manage the entire recruitment journey, from advertising jobs to onboarding new hires. Features like integrated DBS checks and an onboarding hub ensure compliance with statutory safeguarding requirements (KCSIE) and keep new staff engaged during the often-long period between offer and start date.

## Handle compliance and audits with confidence across your trust

Your trust central teams are responsible for ensuring consistency and compliance across multiple schools – managing complex HR records, statutory compliance checks, and performance management for hundreds or even thousands of employees. Manual or fragmented systems can lead to duplicated data, wasted time, and a higher risk of non-compliance. With a central system, your trust leaders can easily track compliance activities, such as policy sign-offs and document expiry dates for all schools across your trust.

# How SAMpeople transformed HR and recruitment for Fairfax MAT



Claire Clarke, Head of People,  
Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust

## Tell us about your trust and your role at Fairfax?

"I joined Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust two years ago and have recently moved from an HR Business Partner to the Head of People. We have six posts within the HR team, including one person who focuses on recruitment and onboarding, supporting approximately 450 staff across the trust."

## What challenges were you facing prior to SAMpeople?

"When I joined, we didn't have a fit-for-purpose HRIS, and the trust was exploring ATS options. We were using Microsoft Teams as our employee information storage area, and we didn't have an applicant tracking system (ATS), so our recruitment process, even in the central function, was very manual. We had trackers coming out of our ears – trackers for recruitment, onboarding, case work, absence triggers and more. Our recruitment documents were all on physical paper – interview packs, application forms. They would all be printed, passed to the hiring managers, completed and passed back."

*We were literally passing physical paperwork around, and it would just end up stuck in someone's drawer somewhere.*

With onboarding, we would manually type in reference, DBS and QTS numbers. Everything was really admin-heavy.

With the Single Central Record (SCR), there was a lot of opportunity for human error – you could easily input the wrong number. We would routinely do data cleansing, which was time-consuming and manual."

## Tell us about the impact of SAMpeople and SAMpeople Recruit.

"One of the selling points was how SAMpeople Recruit imported staff into the HRIS, SAMpeople – that automated process was a real benefit."

*Once implemented, we saw an instant difference in the onboarding process – it immediately removed a lot of the admin work.*

Together, both systems are quite intuitive.

Using SAMpeople Recruit, we rarely see physical paperwork now. From a data protection point of view, that's a massive improvement. We haven't got people's data sitting in a drawer somewhere that our Data Protection Officer would kill us for! We can verify ID documents online, again reducing that manual admin. Managing the candidates is easier – it's much easier to see who is a suitable candidate and not.

We've had feedback from candidates that the system is easy to use and the onboarding has been a positive experience. At the moment, we have a 75% success rate for appointing roles first time."

"The Single Central Record (SCR) module has had a huge impact – in terms of benefits of SAMpeople, this one is one of the biggest pluses! We've managed to move away from spreadsheets, meaning that the hours of SCR data cleansing just doesn't happen now. The potential human errors are completely removed now. It's been a massive improvement. We have had a couple of Ofsted visits, and they've been complimentary about the visual RAG rating on the SAMpeople SCR. It works really well. Our academies are now all using it, and the RAG rating means it's really easy to identify any updates required."

*The accuracy of HR data across the trust has seen a real improvement as we have reduced duplicate entry, and through SAMpeople Recruit, information is being pushed straight into our employee profiles and the SCR.*

The more we can do in the system, the fewer errors are likely to occur because everything's being pulled through as opposed to being manually input.

*SAMpeople and SAMpeople Recruit together has absolutely had an impact on managing the entire employee journey. It has removed duplication and the need for multiple departments to be involved.*

*The whole process is streamlined."*

# How SAMpeople Recruit optimised Raleigh Education Trust's hiring process



Empowering through education

Sally Boaden, Chief Finance and  
Operating Officer, Raleigh  
Education Trust

SAMpeople Recruit has been instrumental in delivering part of our people strategy to systemise the recruitment process. We have recruited 142 staff from 894 applications since we started in April 2022.

Before SAMpeople Recruit, a lot of our time was spent on shortlisting, chasing references and going back and forth to set up interviews. Vacancy requests were approved on paper as part of a lengthy process.

*Now, the process is online and streamlined, everything is so much more effective.*

Previously, we would have to meet with candidates to gather information, but now they can upload everything online prior to the interview, which saves lots of time."

It is very methodical, easy to manage and follow, guiding candidates through the correct process. To be able to just touch a button to send out for references is by far the biggest time saver. The impact has been that references are received in a timely manner. SAMpeople Recruit sends automatic reminders every 24 hours for those who have not returned them, saving more time.

As Safer Recruitment Accredited Trainers, SAMpeople and FusionHR have thought of everything. SAMpeople Recruit provides a systematic approach, so you can't move on until a check has been completed.

*SAMpeople Recruit has solved a lot of challenges for us, and since we started using the software, we have managed to hire 142 people with ease.*

It has been brilliant in saving time and money. It helps to reduce the worry around recruitment and the numerous safer recruitment checks. I would absolutely recommend it, without a shadow of a doubt."



# Next steps



Marie Watson  
Business Development Manager  
SAMpeople Recruit

It can be tough to keep great teachers and staff, and finding the right people to replace them is even harder. In trusts, it's a challenge that can feel overwhelming. I truly hope this guide has given you some valuable ideas and strategies you can take back to your own trust to tackle these challenges head-on.

Having the right systems and tools can make a world of difference. That's where SAMpeople and SAMpeople Recruit come in. They're designed specifically to streamline your HR and recruitment processes, freeing up your time to focus on what matters most: your people.

Curious to see how they could have a real impact in your trust? Discover how our bespoke HR and recruitment solutions can transform your trust's approach to staff retention and recruitment with a personalised demonstration.

Scan the QR code, book on our demo webinars and let us show you how.





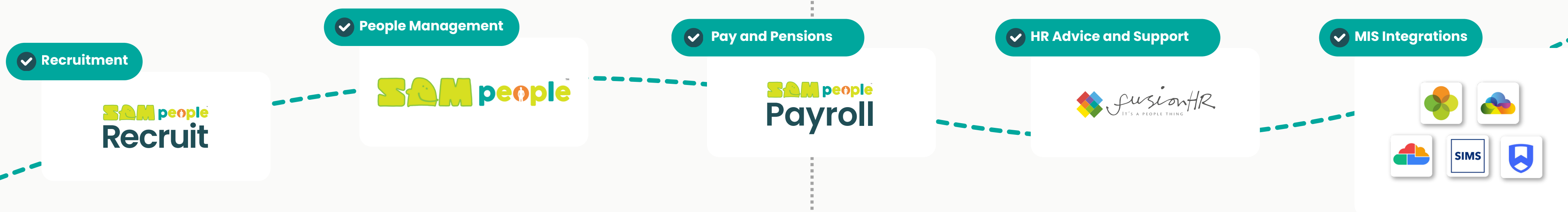
How else can we help you

# Simplify and connect the whole employee journey

From hiring to payroll to case management – our suite of integrated products and services help you streamline, support and join up every aspect of people management in education.

"The impact has been amazing, we are seeing change and we are seeing each school engaging with the systems. It's helping build an inclusive culture."

Sally Boaden, Chief Finance & Operating Officer, Raleigh Education Trust



## We help over 2,600 schools and trusts to:

### Finally understand the complete picture of their staff

Our products join up all your staff data, so you can track every interaction. Turn scattered touchpoints into clear insights about absences, recruitment, retention and wellbeing, and know exactly where to focus your attention.

### Scale HR without increasing headcount

With a strong HR infrastructure, it's easy to roll out consistent processes and policies and treat everyone the same way. And with our people services team at FusionHR, HR advice, consultancy and strategy is only a phone call away.

### Dramatically reduce HR admin for everyone

With self-service tools for employees, and helpful reports, automations, alerts and templates for managers, HR quickly becomes less of a mountain.

## We're education people, people

We created SAMpeople because we've been there.

Founded by former school staff and our education HR specialists at FusionHR, we're bringing together decades of HR expertise with the latest in people management technology.

Read our story at [sampeople.co.uk/about](https://sampeople.co.uk/about)

Book a demo or find out more at

→ [sampeople.co.uk](https://sampeople.co.uk)

→ 01924 907319